

Welcome!

A Vision for Willis Woods

Public Forum #1

November 18, 2021

**The meeting will begin in a few minutes.
While we wait, please add to the chat your
favorite place to go for a walk.**

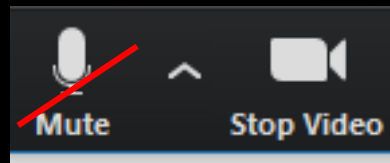




Speaker View

WELCOME
Let's get oriented!

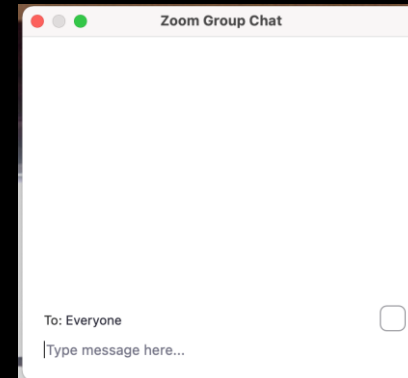
Start muted



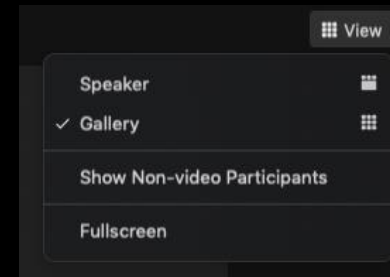
Name yourself



Use the chat!



Change your view



Mute Start Video

1 Participants

Chat

Share Screen

Polling

Record

Closed Caption

Breakout Rooms

Reactions

More

End

Notification of Recording

This meeting will be recorded and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) may choose to retain and distribute the video, still images, audio, and/or the chat transcript. By continuing with this virtual meeting, you are consenting to participate in a recorded event. The recordings and chat transcript will be considered a public record. If you do not feel comfortable being recorded, please turn off your camera and/or mute your microphone, or leave the meeting.





A Vision for Willis Woods

Public Forum #1

November 18, 2021

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Background
 - Project background
 - Existing conditions
 - Partners present: What are the opportunities?
3. What do YOU think?
4. Next

Introductions



Project team

Lynnfield:

Emilie Cademartori, Director
of Planning & Conservation;
Jennifer Welter, Planning and
Conservation staff

Middleton:

Katrina O'Leary, Town Planner

North Reading:

Danielle McKnight, Town
Planner;
Phil Hertz, Land Utilization
Committee member

Peabody:

Brendan Callahan, Assistant
Director of Planning

Greenbelt, Essex County Land Trust:

Chris LaPointe, Director of
Land Conservation

Ipswich River Watershed Association:

Patrick Lynch, Director of
Policy & Planning

MAPC:

Ella Wise, Senior Land Use
Planner;
David Loutzenheiser, Senior
Transportation Planner

How about you?

To connect to the interactive poll:

If you have your phone nearby, open a new browser window and go to **pollev.com/mapcpoll**

-OR-

If not or if you're joining by phone, click the link on the chat, which will send you to **pollev.com/mapcpoll**

When poll is active, respond at **pollev.com/mapcpoll**

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Where do you live?

Lynnfield

Peabody

Middleton

North Reading

Other

Project Background

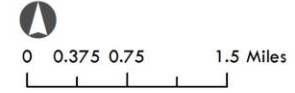


What is Willis Woods?

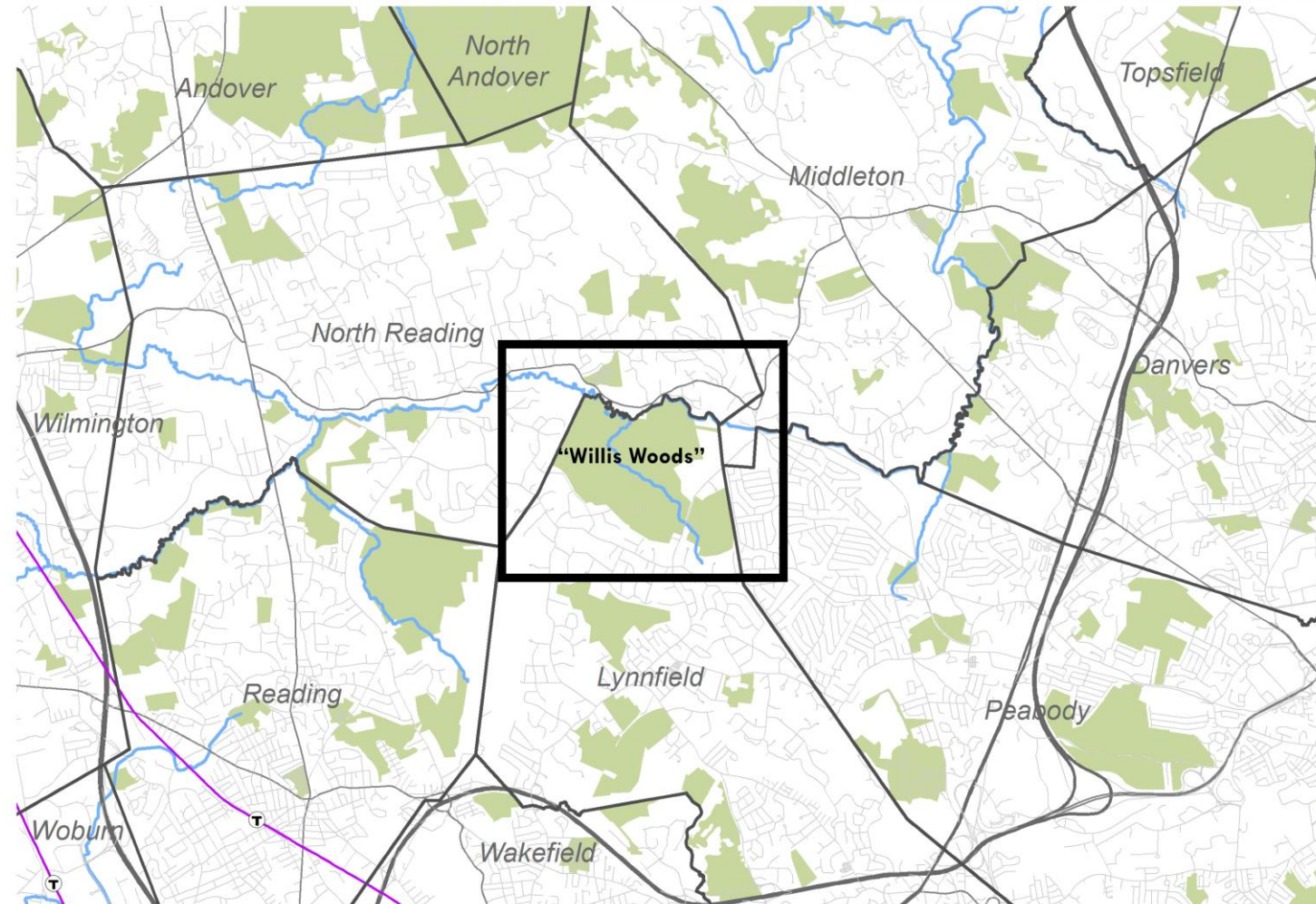
- 600+ acres of forestland along the Ipswich River
- Largest undeveloped area in the Ipswich River Watershed, much larger than Walden Woods
- Owned by Lynnfield Center Water District and Town of Lynnfield
- Until now, has been prohibited from public access

Willis Woods Context

- MA Towns
- Commuter Rail



MAPC
Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS
Date: November 2021



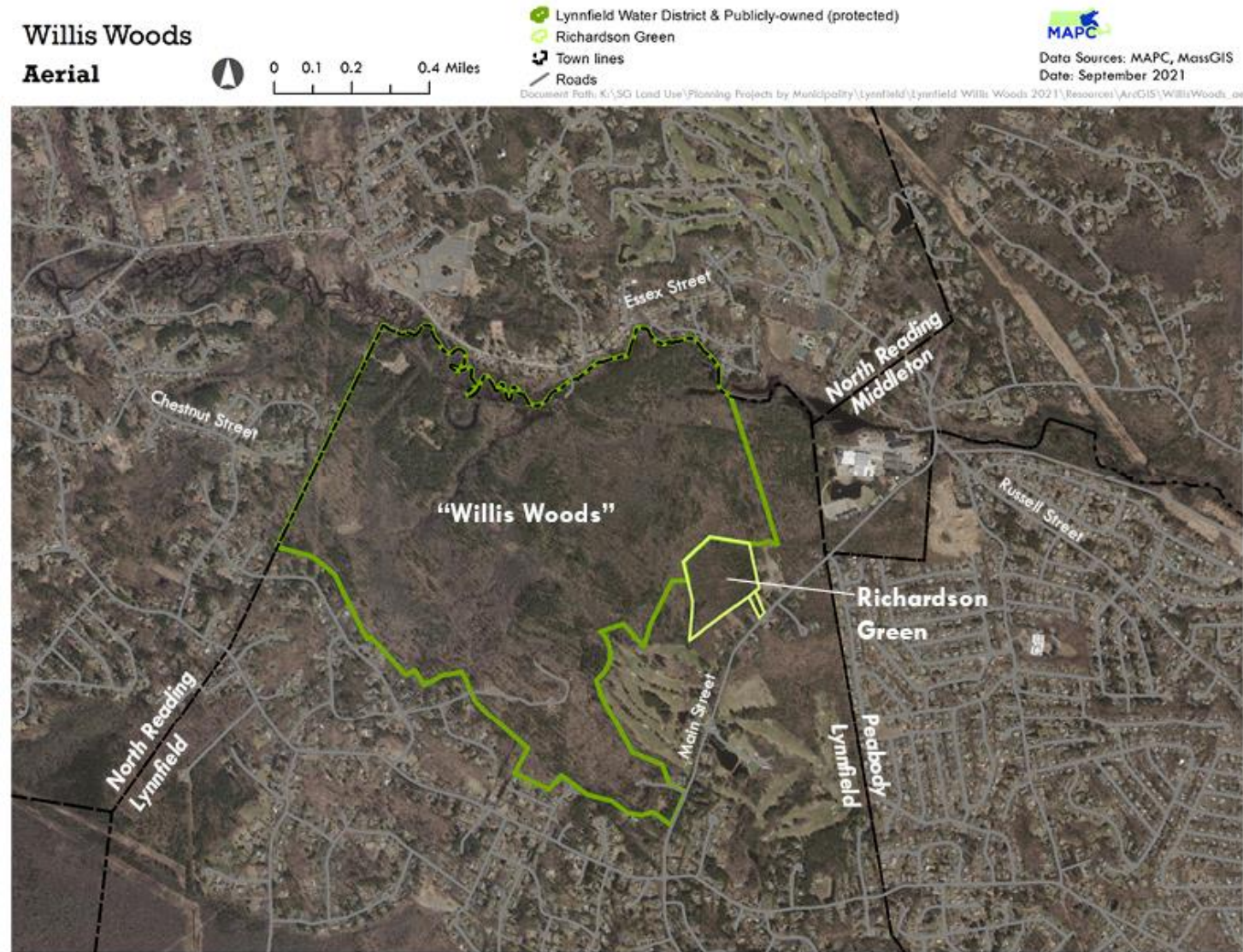
What are the new opportunities? What has changed?

- Interest in providing public access, including to the existing rail bed



What are the new opportunities? What has changed?

- Interest in providing public access, including to the existing rail bed
- Protection of Richardson Green, a key parcel adjacent to Willis Woods with access to Lynnfield's Main Street



What is “A Vision for Willis Woods”?

Develop a shared vision and action steps for protecting open space and natural resources and developing new recreational opportunities at the confluence of Lynnfield, North Reading, Peabody, and Middleton.

What is the process?



Existing conditions

Please add questions to the chat,
and we'll answer them after the
presentation.



Willis Woods

Aerial



0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles

- Lynnfield Water District & Publicly-owned (protected)
- Richardson Green
- Town lines
- Roads

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Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS
Date: September 2021



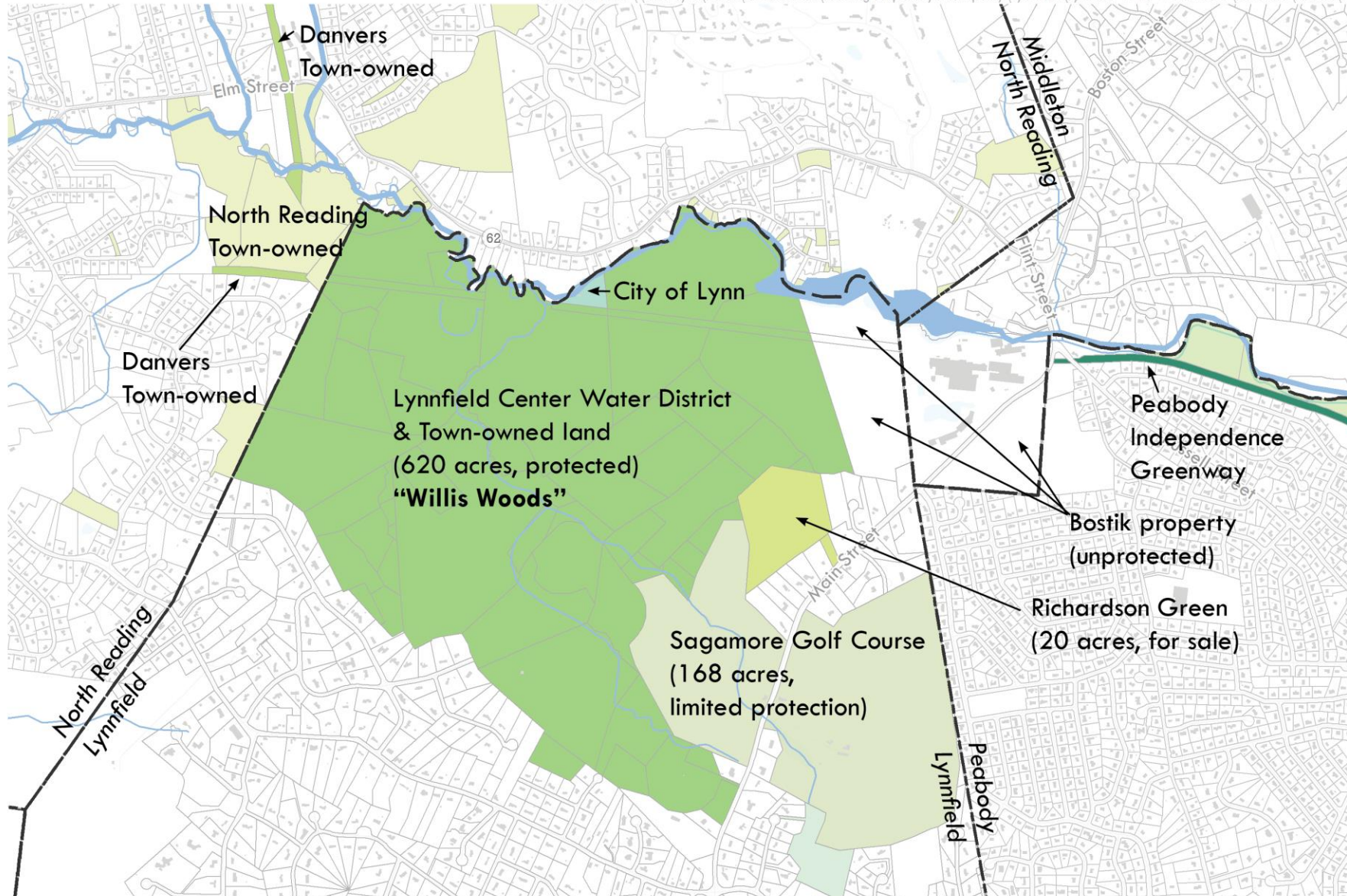
Willis Woods Protected Land & Ownership

Rivers and Streams



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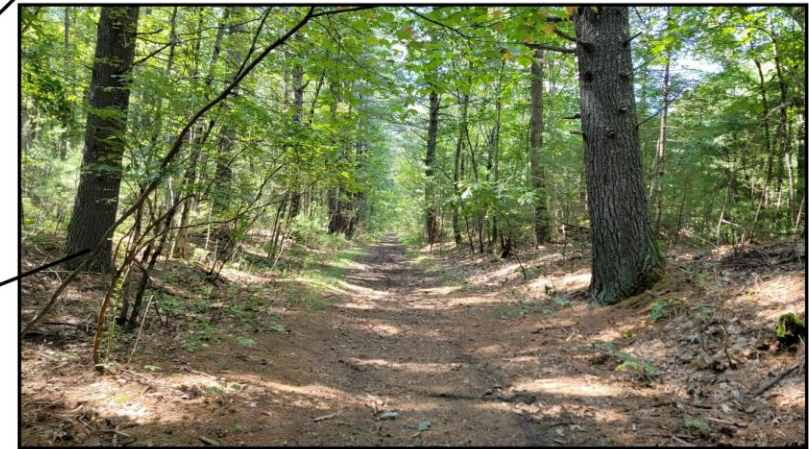
existing rail bed along the River



long, straight stretch of existing rail bed



Existing rail bed



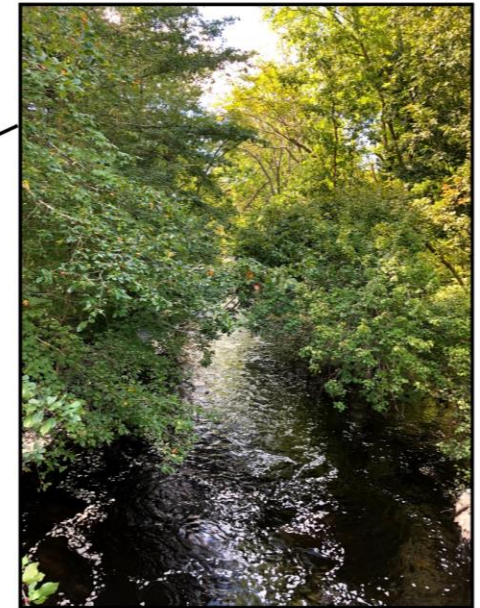
Ipswich River



Dam near Bostik



Ipswich River



Pedestrian bridge



City of Lynn bridge



Existing bridges



ATV course and recent use



Recent ATV use



Prohibited ATV use



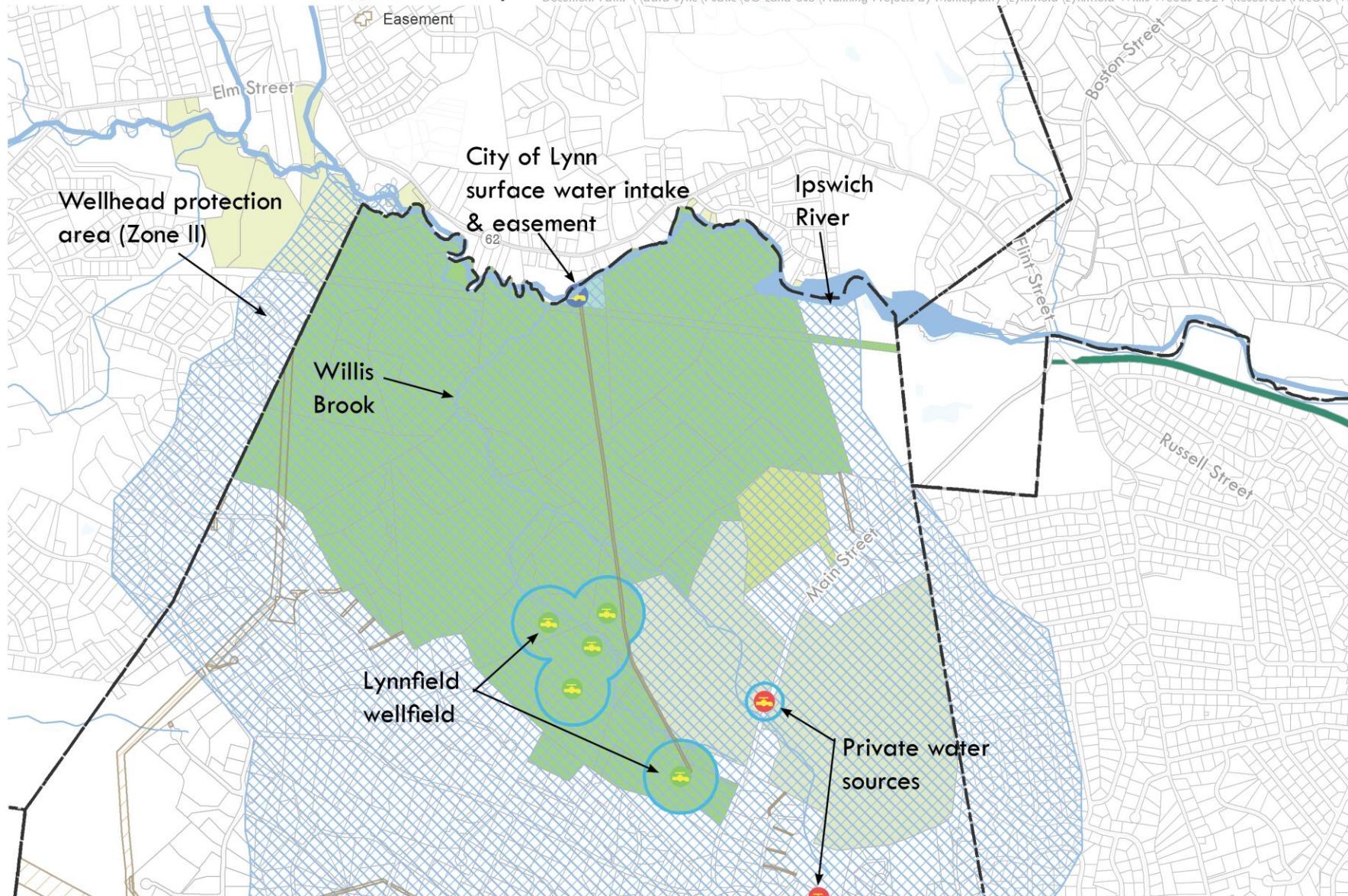
Willis Woods

Water Resources

- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Community Groundwater Source
- Surface Water Intake
- Non-Community Groundwater Source
- Easement
- DEP Approved Zone I
- Wellhead Protection Area




0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles



Willis Woods

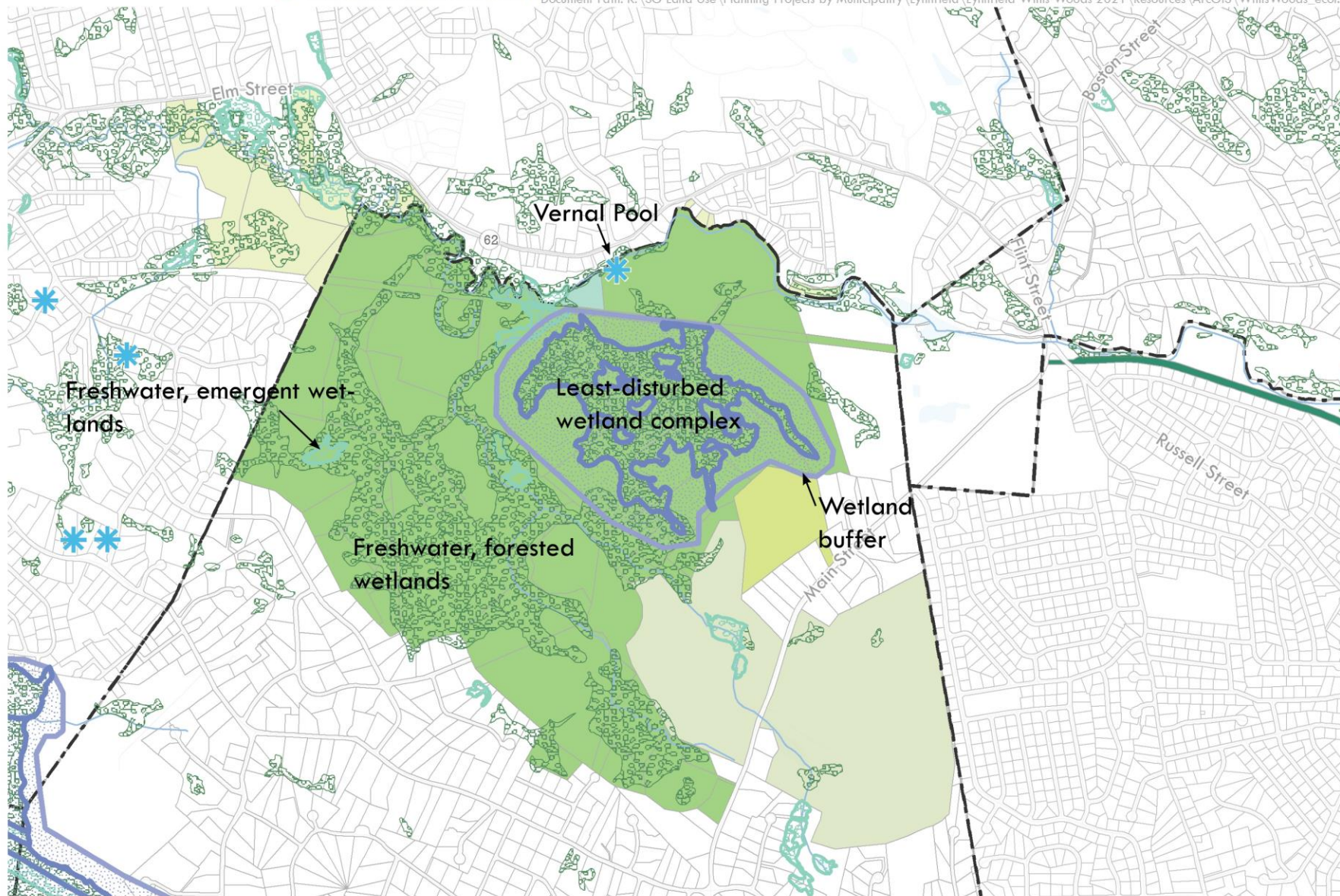
Wetlands & Habitat

-  Least-disturbed wetland complexes
-  Upland buffer
-  NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
-  Freshwater Emergent Wetland
-  Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

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Willis Woods

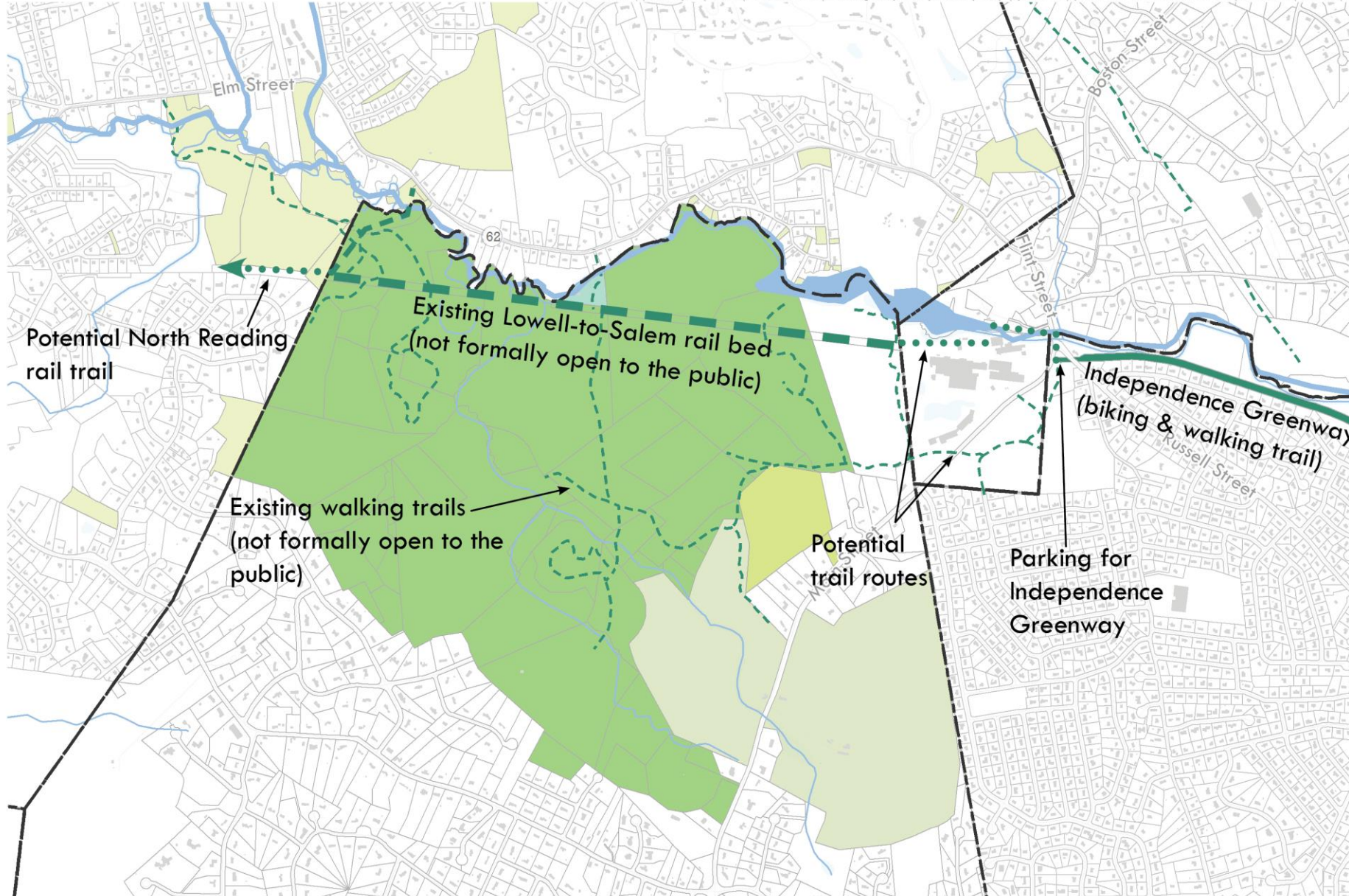
Recreation: Trails & river access

- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Independence Greenway
- Existing
- Richardson Green
- Lynnfield Center Water District & Town-owned
- City of Lynn
- North Reading Town-owned
- Sagamore Golf Course



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

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Willis Woods

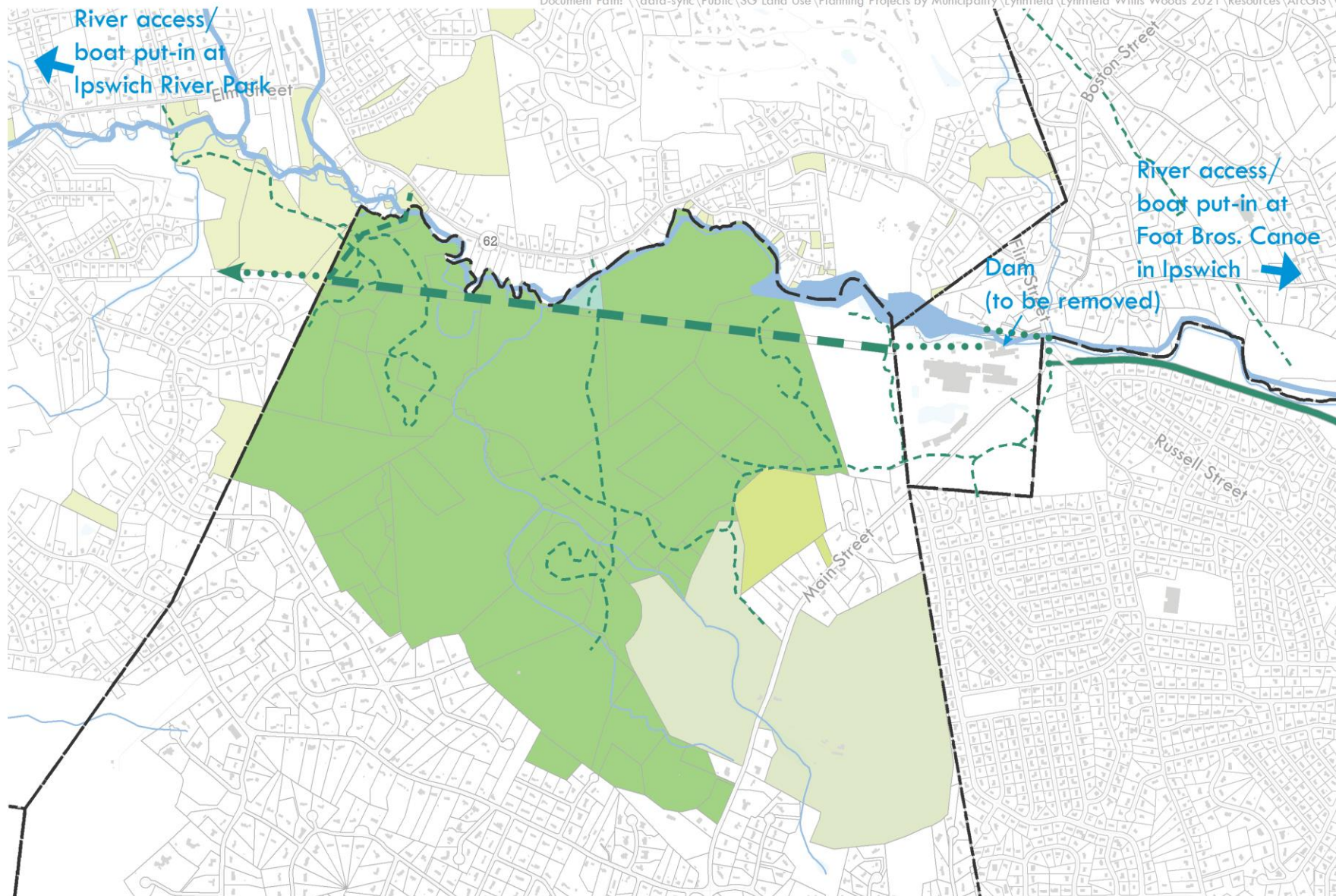
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0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

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When poll is active, respond at **pollev.com/mapcpoll**

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join

Have you ever been to Willis Woods?

No, I didn't know that this large area of forest
along the river or the rail bed existed.

No, but I have wondered about the area.

Yes, I have walked the area.

Yes, I enjoy riding my ATV in that general area.

Other

Have you been on the Independence Greenway in Peabody?

Yes, I walk on it
regularly.

Yes, I bike on it
regularly.

Yes, a few times.

No, but I look forward
to exploring it!

Other

Have you been on the Ipswich River?

Yes, I've kayaked/canoed/fished
along this stretch.

Yes, I've kayaked/canoed/fished
along a different stretch.

No, but I would love to.

No, I'm more of a land trail
person.

Other

Partner presentations



Lynnfield

Opportunities?

1. Passive Recreation on hundreds of acres for residents/visitors
2. Permanent protection of water resources – watershed protection for Lynnfield Center Water District wellfields, as well as surface water users in communities downstream
3. Access to Ipswich River
4. Protection of wildlife corridors, habitat
5. Climate Resilience with preservation of forested acreage
6. Restoration of damaged areas from unauthorized ATV trail use

Lynnfield

How does this build on existing efforts

1. Answers long-published requests from residents for additional open space for passive recreation – Master Plan surveys-2002,2018, Open Space & Recreation Plan surveys-1998, 2010,2017
2. Responds to goals of Lynnfield's MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Plan)
3. Builds on possible “keystone” and formal access through Richardson Green 20-acre parcel if purchased by Town of Lynnfield
4. Connects trails within Lynnfield to wider regional network – Peabody, North Reading, Middleton
5. Continues efforts seeking further permanent protection of undeveloped private and municipal properties in the Ipswich River Watershed

Peabody

Support Regional Multi-Use Greenway Network Development

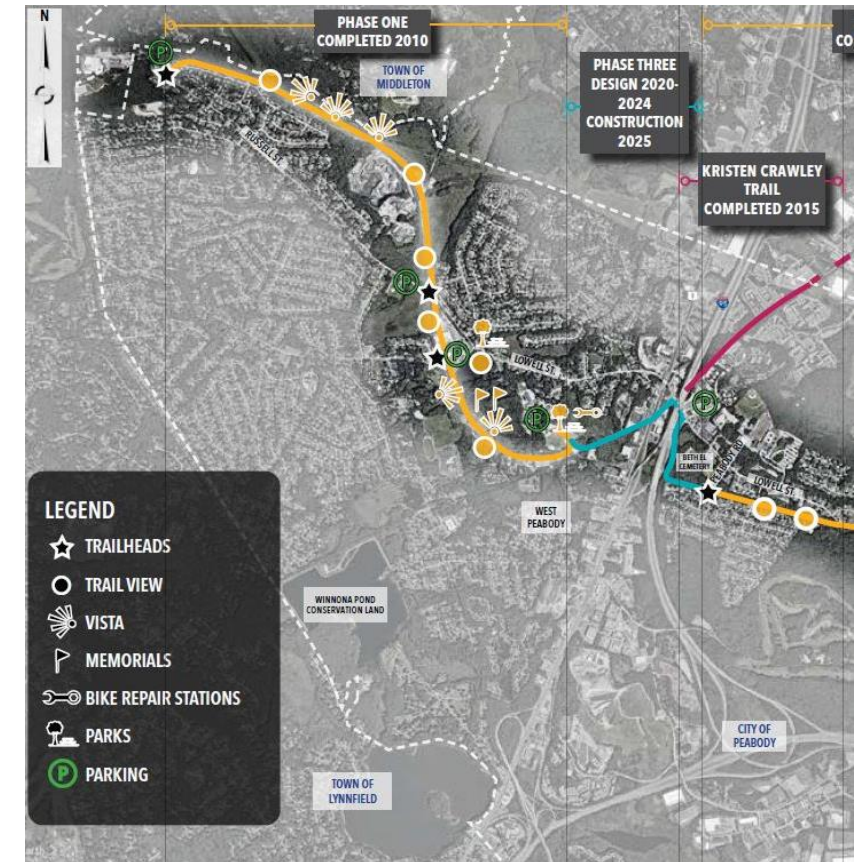
- The Independence Greenway acts as the critical link within the region's Border to Boston shared use trail network that links approximately 20 communities for non-motorized uses including walking, bicycling, and more.
- Working with Willis Woods project partners advances the larger vision of this greenway system connecting with our neighboring communities like Middleton, Lynnfield, North Reading, and Essex County trail networks.

Support Alternative Transportation Resources for the Region

- The development of the region's greenway network will connect residents to important commercial, residential, and transportation nodes within the region and existing park and recreation facilities.
- The greenway will serve the regions need for safer and more convenient active transportation infrastructure.

Promote Healthy Lifestyle and Open Space Connections

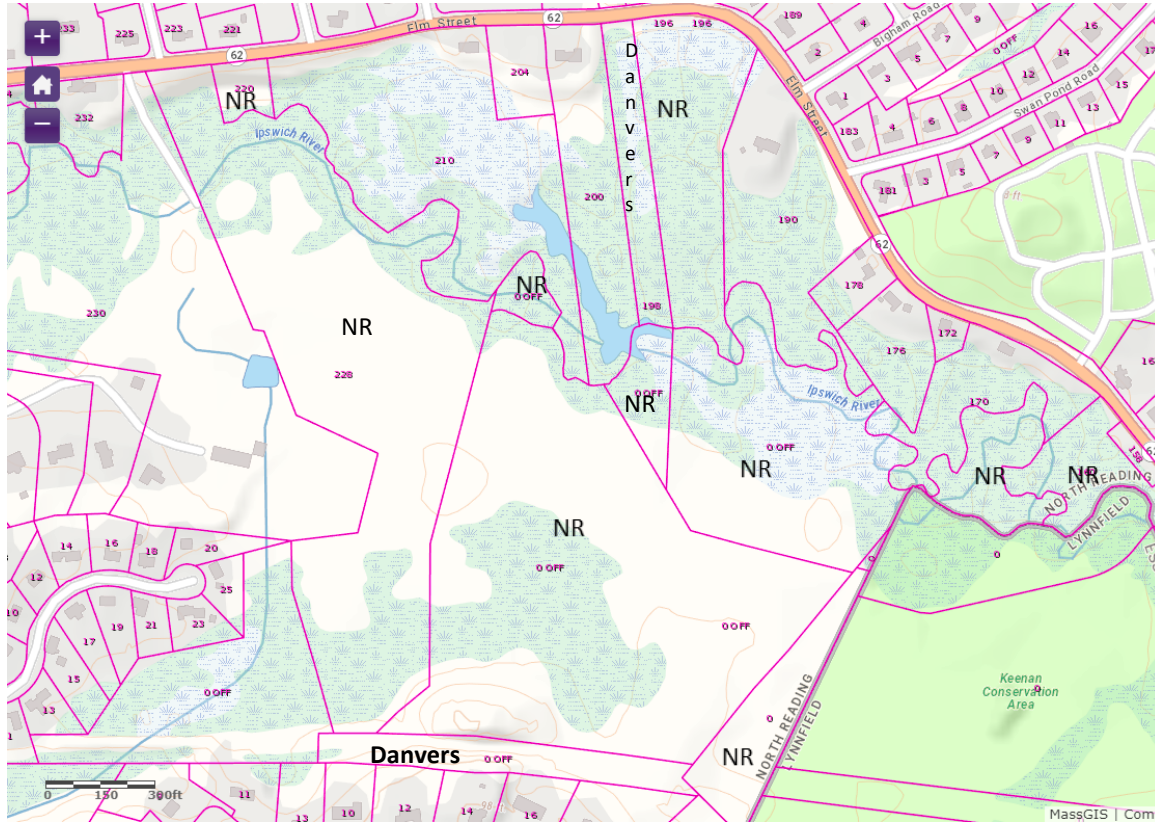
- The development of the greenway will provide the region recreational opportunities, promote healthy lifestyle, and connect communities to the regions open spaces.



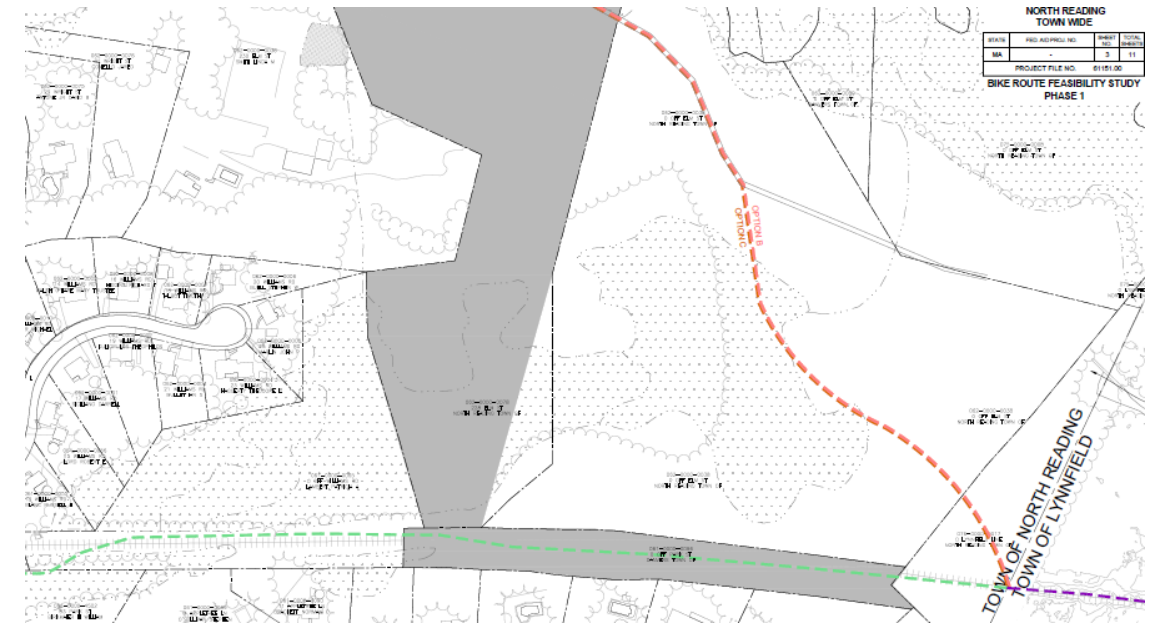
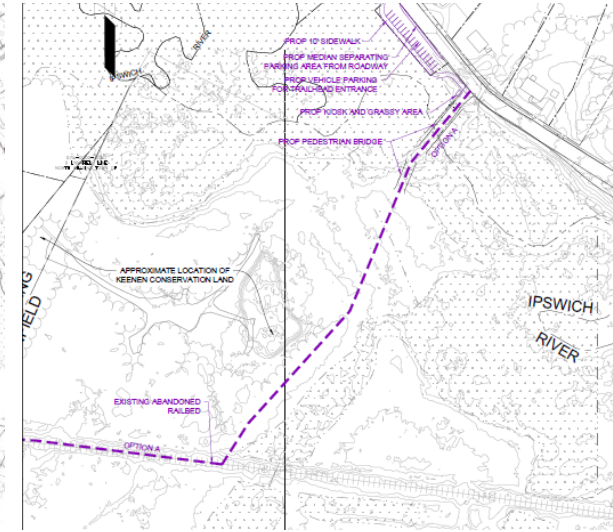
North Reading

- The western portion of Willis Woods is largely publicly owned land within N. Reading
- This area of Town offers trails and lovely vistas of the Ipswich River
- However, there is no public access
- The Willis Woods project potentially provides access from the east through Lynnfield and Middleton
- The proposed N. Reading Recreational Trail could also provide access via new bridges over the River to Elm St/ Rt. 62
- When completed, the Recreational Trail would connect this area to Ipswich River Park and possibly Route 28.

N. Reading Section of Willis Woods

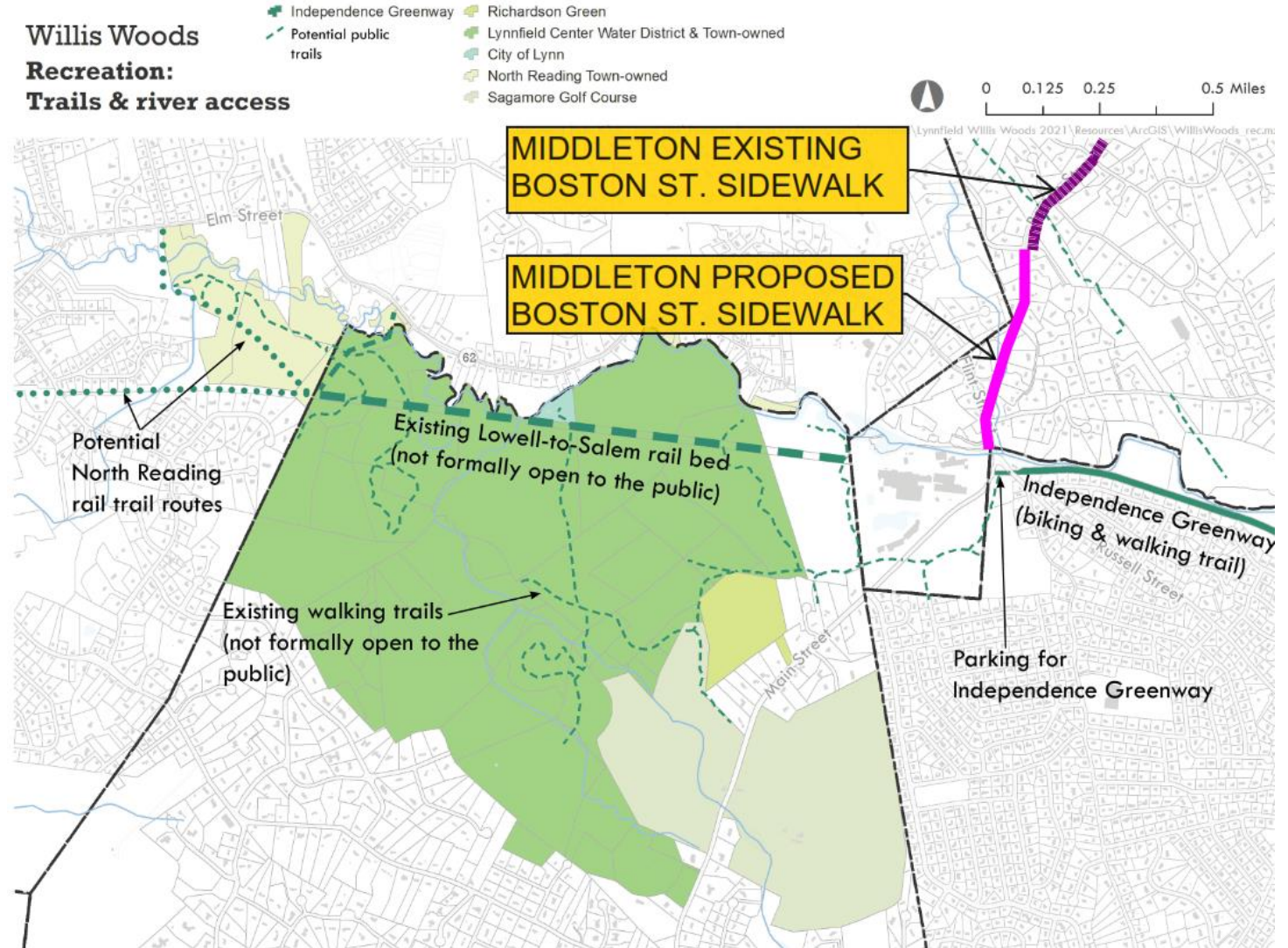


- The western end of Willis Woods is in N. Reading and mostly includes publicly owned lands
- Today, there are no public right of ways into this land from N. Reading.
- The proposed N. Reading Recreational Trail is considering three options to provide access from Elm Street (Route 62).



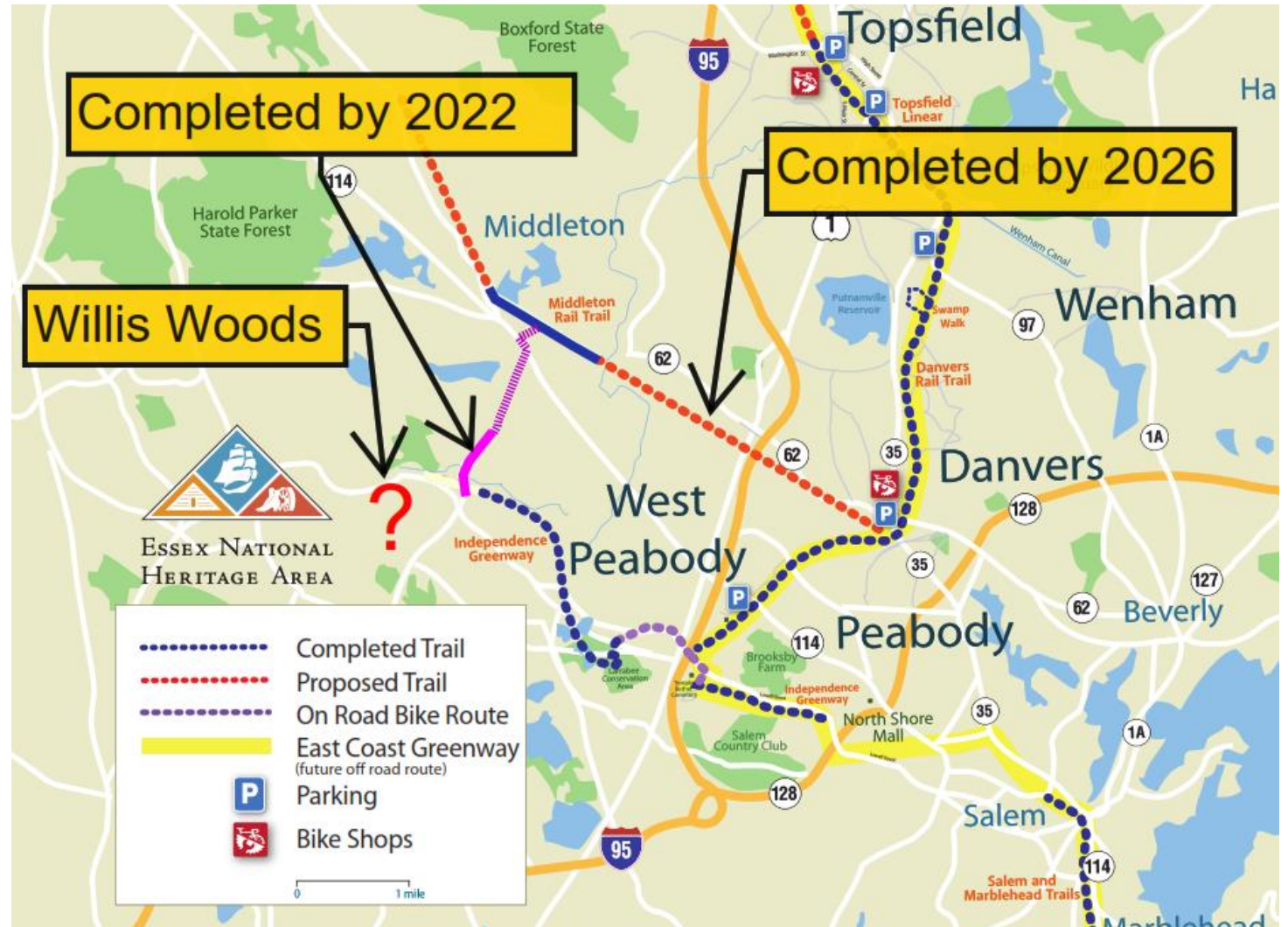
Middleton

- Creates incentive to expand existing sidewalk network
- Boston Street Sidewalk is high priority for Town



Middleton

- Small connections have big impacts on the larger network
- By 2026, newly finished trails will allow safe pedestrian/bicycling across the Northshore



#EndangeredIpswich

The Ipswich River is one of America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2021. Help us save it.

Ipswich River

- 2021: One of America's Most Endangered Rivers® due to overuse + climate crisis
- Who we are: 1,500 members in 20+ communities on the North Shore
- Engaging our leaders at all levels on solutions for residents, cities & towns & state agencies



Watch John Kerry's Full Remarks here!

April 13, 2021, Ipswich, MA. – American Rivers named the Ipswich River among America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2021, citing the grave threat to ecosystem health and regional water security in the context of climate change. [Download our full press release here.](#)



@ipswich_river

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, YOUTUBE, FACEBOOK

You can save our rivers!

Scroll or click for how to join our growing movement. Check back for more news.

[Resident-led Action →](#)

[Support Our Cities and Towns →](#)

[State Policy →](#)



IPSWICH RIVER
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
The Voice of the River



Ipswich River

- Upper Ipswich Watershed aka "The Headwaters"
- Local leaders maintain free public access
- Water Trail navigable from Wilmington to Ipswich!
- S. Middleton Dam removal: final permitting stages



Greenbelt

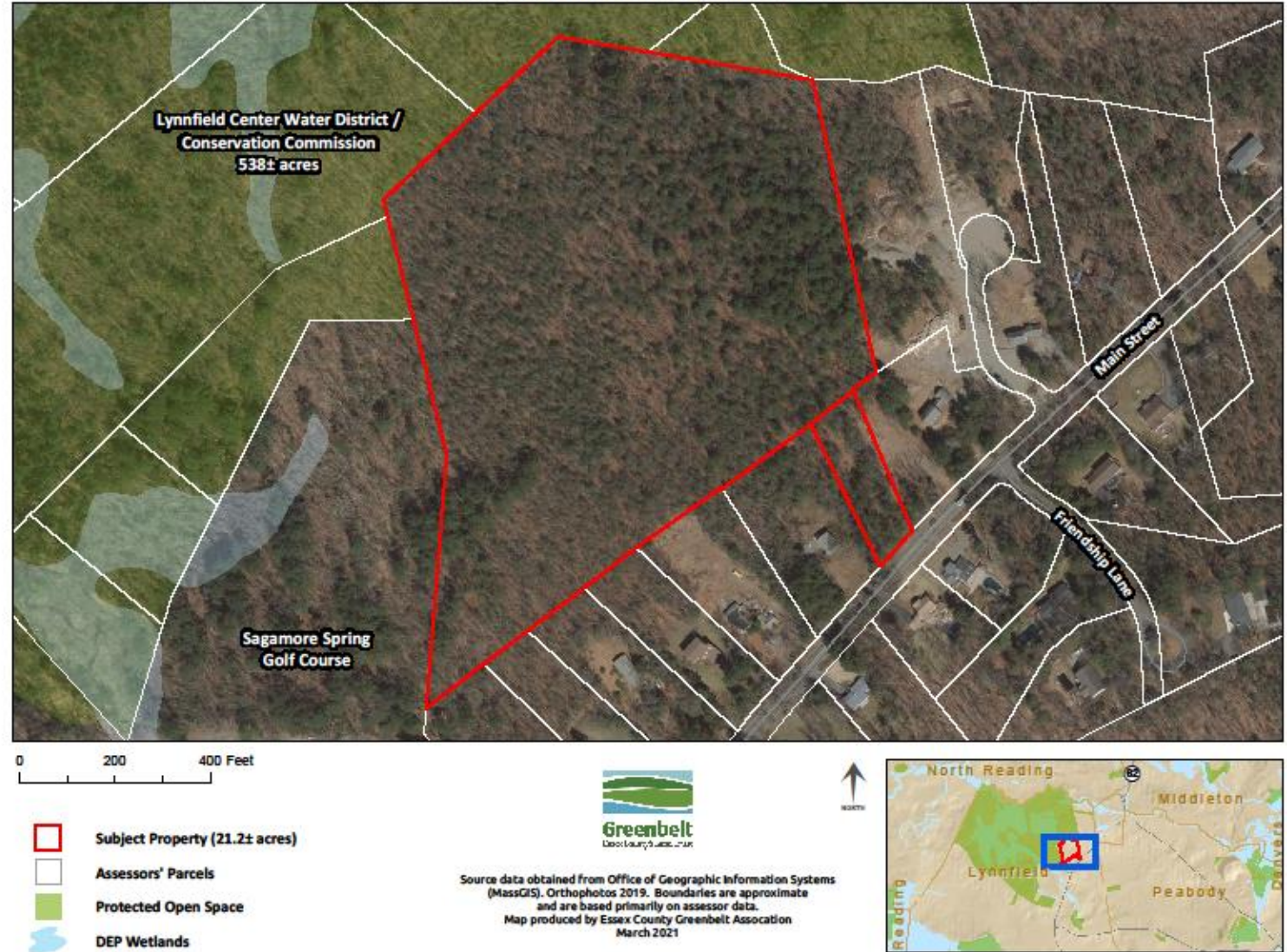
- Protect and steward 18,500 acres county-wide
- Purchase and protect “Richardson Green” parcel – 20 acres
- Create safe, attractive public access there, that could connect to larger Willis Woods network



Greenbelt

- Partnership project
- Multiple funding sources

Richardson Green, Lynnfield



Greenbelt

- Protect woods and river
- Safe, accessible public trails
- Expand areas of protected land



Questions?



Let's hear
from YOU!



Respond at pollev.com/mapcpoll

Text **MAPCPOLL** to **22333** once to join, then **A, B, C, D, E...**

Protecting Lynnfield's water supply is highest priority.

Which other goals should the project team prioritize?

Choose up to 5.

Improve and maintain public walking paths through Willis Woods

A

Improve and maintain a public rail trail through Willis Woods

B

Connect the rail trail to the Independence Greenway and potential future trails in North Reading

C

Permanently protect open space

D

Prevent prohibited uses, including ATV use

E

Provide safe access to the Ipswich River

F

Remove the dam in the Ipswich River

G

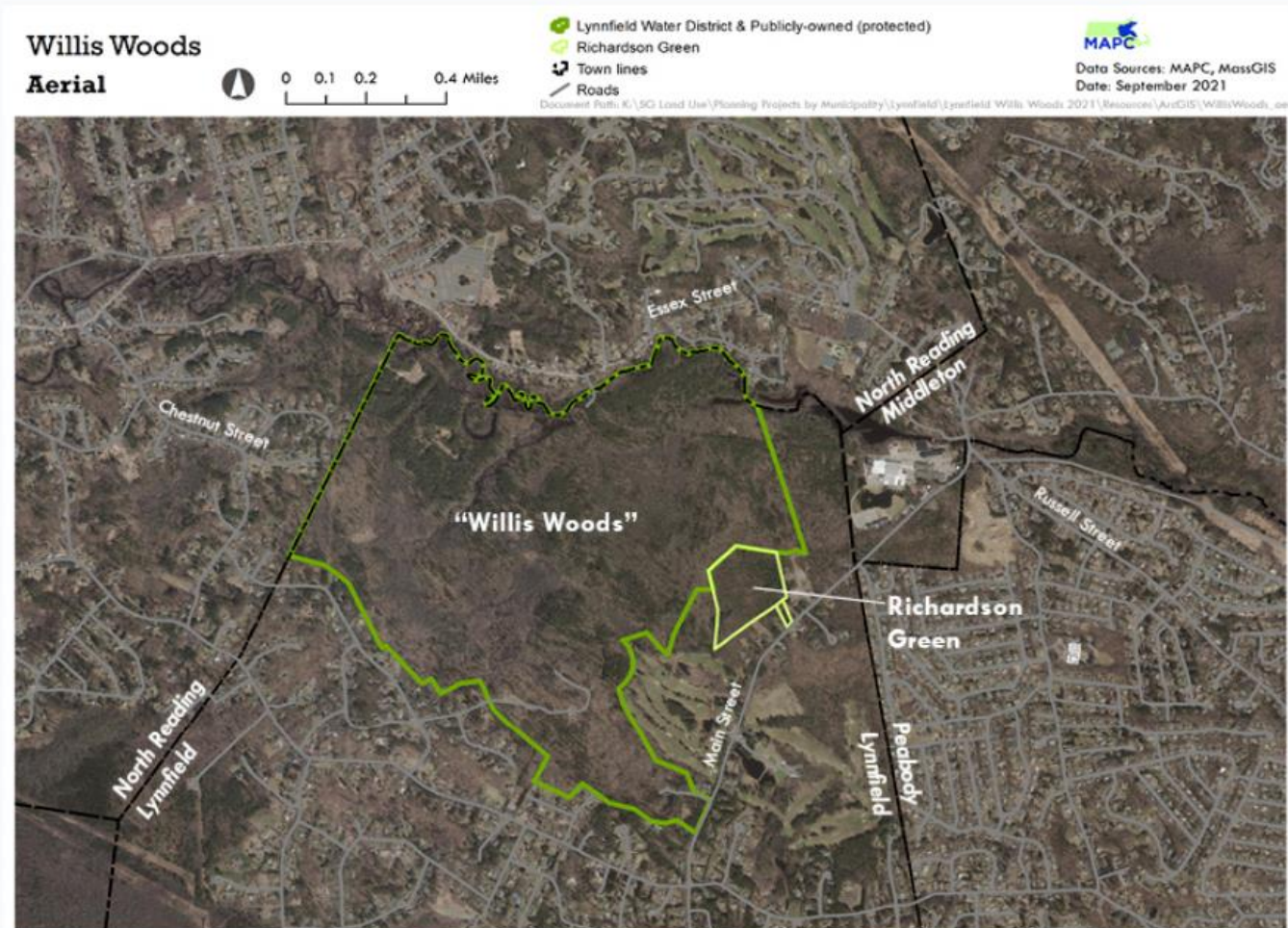
Explore finding space for legal ATV use in appropriate areas nearby

H

Protect wetlands and habitat

I

Where would you most prefer to access Willis Woods? Click on the map.



Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at pollev.com/app

How would you prefer to access Willis Woods, if it was easy and safe?

By walking/biking from my neighborhood in Lynnfield

By walking/biking from my neighborhood in Middleton

By walking/biking from my neighborhood in North Reading

By walking/biking from my neighborhood in Peabody

By walking/biking along the Independence Greenway

By parking at one main access point

By parking at one of many smaller access points

Other

What would you like to see as part of the Vision for Willis Woods that hasn't been discussed?

Top

Small group discussion

- What would you like to see considered that hasn't been discussed?
- Anything else?

Next

- Please visit the project webpage to sign up for updates:

www.town.lynnfield.ma.us/willis-woods

- Project team will start drafting the Vision Plan, including action steps.

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the green leaves, creating dappled light on the path. Two large tree trunks are prominent on either side of the path. The text "Thank you" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

Thank you